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Reports of the Joint Inspection Unit

Summary

In 2004, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continued its strong support of the inter-agency coordination and harmonization reform efforts initiated by the Secretary-General. Specifically, UNDP contributed directly and/or via the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) to the preparation of several reports or drafts of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on selected United Nations practices ranging from results-based management (RBM), procurement management, and conditions of travel, to headquarters agreements affecting human resources management.

The present report provides a synopsis of the 10 reports prepared by JIU in 2004 and 2005, followed by selected recommendations of interest to UNDP from each report and UNDP comments thereon.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to take note of the present report, especially those aspects of the JIU reports that have particular relevance to the work of UNDP.

Individual reports

A. Multilingualism and access to information: case study of the International Civil Aviation Organizations (JIU/REP/2005/1)

Scope

1. The objective of the report is to evaluate the conditions allowing the implementation of multilingualism in ICAO.

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Comments by UNDP

2. UNDP has reviewed the report and has taken note of the recommendations.

B. Review of the headquarters agreements concluded by the organizations of the United Nations system: human resources issues affecting staff (JIU/REP/2004/2)

Scope

3. The objective of the report is to identify areas where adjustments in headquarters agreements may be advisable, with particular emphasis on those areas that are essential to the reform of human resources management and to contribute to the elaboration of model rules for future headquarters agreements and, where possible, the amendments of existing agreements.

Comments by UNDP

4. Notwithstanding the current state of heightened security alerts in many countries, UNDP agrees that there is always room for improvement in the simplification of procedures to facilitate the exercise of privileges, immunities and facilities granted by United Nations organizations (recommendation 1), the electronic dissemination of relevant information and to remind the host Government and consequently, the local administration and business communities of the importance of fully implementing the provisions thereof (recommendation 2 to 5).

5. Operationally, UNDP has always leveraged and will continue to leverage the assistance of the Office of Legal Services in resolving issues relating to the exercise of privileges, immunities and facilities as articulated in the principle of "most favoured treatment". Working with the host Government, the Office of Legal Services has been effective in resolving certain challenges in processing G4 visas for staff holding passports from the Middle East region. In other cases, UNDP has resolved to find alternative sites for interviews to be conducted for the Leadership Development (LEAD) programme.

6. UNDP has invested and will continue to invest in the training of staff including that of the Resident Representative and the Deputy Resident Representative concerning UNDP privileges and obligations in their capacity as staff of the United Nations.

7. On the formulation of a model framework headquarters agreement or standard articles (recommendation 6), UNDP understands that the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly recently initiated discussions about incorporating additional provisions in headquarters agreements to protect the safety and security of personnel and the effort could be expanded to include the recommendation of the JIU.

C. Administration of justice: harmonization of the statutes of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal and the International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal (JIU/REP/2004/3)

Scope

8. The objective of the report is to provide a definitive opinion on the feasibility of harmonizing the statutes of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal and the International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal with a view to closing the gap between the two and removing the perception of inequality and discrimination of justice within the United Nations family.

Comments by UNDP

9. UNDP has reviewed the report and has taken note of the recommendations.

D. Review of management and administration in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (JIU/REP/2004/4)

Scope

10. The purpose of the report is to contribute to the reform exercises undertaken by UNHCR with a view to improving its management and administration.

Comments by UNDP

11. UNDP has reviewed the report and has taken note of the recommendations.

E. Overview of the series of reports on managing for results in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2004/5 to 8)

Scope

12. This is a series of four reports prepared by JIU with the express objective of identifying the factors that are critical for the successful implementation of results-based management (RBM), as a broad management strategy, in the organizations of the United Nations system and providing a benchmarking framework for such implementation. The Operation Support Group of UNDP made a significant

contribution to the drafting and validation of the benchmarks identified in the report.

Comments by UNDP

13. UNDP would like to commend JIU for the comprehensive scope of the overview report and the three detailed reports. In particular, UNDP acknowledged the very pragmatic approach taken by JIU in identifying relevant (not necessarily exhaustive) benchmarks to assist the United Nations system towards effective implementation of RBM progressively in their respective organizations.

14. UNDP experience in the implementation of the RBM initiative affirmed the assertion by JIU about the key components of a solid RBM system: (a) planning, programming, budgeting process; (b) monitoring and evaluation; (c) delegation of authority and accountability; (d) staff performance management and contracts.

15. In its assessment of 23 United Nations organizations, the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DfID) recently gave UNDP top honours for its focus on internal performance, country-level results and partnership. This is based on the Multilateral Effectiveness Framework (MEFF) that measured organizational effectiveness in using the RBM approach. While UNDP continues to fine-tune its RBM framework to meet its unique and emerging challenges, the independent assessment by DfID validated UNDP experience that the RBM implementation takes time, demands strong leadership and requires organization-wide commitment although future implementers could benefit from a set of enabling conditions or pillars necessary for the effective implementation of RBM in United Nations organizations. UNDP intends to leverage its investment in corporate initiatives such as its Enterprise Resource Planning (Atlas system) to progressively link financial resources to defined outcomes for results-based reporting within the RBM framework.

16. Recently, UNDP was requested by the Finance and Budget Network of the High Level Committee for Management (HLCM), to play a leading role (with active participation by UNFPA and UNICEF) in defining the framework for the implementation of results-based budgeting (RBB). Given that RBM is about what the organization is trying to achieve (results or outcomes) and defining what will be required to achieve those outcomes, RBB is therefore the logical step for linking resources to results in that framework.

F. Procurement practices within the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2004/9)

Scope

17. The objective of the report is to identify opportunities for increasing procurement efficiency and effectiveness in the United Nations system, especially

through productivity enhancement, improved cooperation and coordination and technological innovations.

Comments by UNDP

18. UNDP welcomes the comprehensive scope of the report and in particular, agrees with those strategic issues that can contribute to enhancing the cost-effectiveness of the procurement process within and among the organizations – namely, cooperation and coordination, electronic procurement and capacity-building.

19. On the sharing of procurement performance benchmarks and best practices (recommendation 1) and the concept of lead procurement agency (recommendation 2), it should be noted that since 2004, the HLCM has incorporated the work of the Inter-Agency Procurement Working Group (IAPWG) into the HLCM agenda. Procurement benchmarking is tentatively on the agenda of the 30th meeting of the IAPWG in Moscow in May 2005.

20. UNDP agrees with the recommendation that procurement staff should have adequate and timely legal support (recommendation 4) and focus on certification of procurement staff (recommendation 5). At UNDP, procurement staff also receives training on legal aspects of procurement. In 2005, UNDP will launch a specific programmatic initiative towards capacity-building in procurement within developing countries.

21. UNDP agrees with the recommendation on multilingual publication of Procurement Manuals (recommendation 6). UNDP plans to issue its revised Procurement Manual in English, French and Spanish later in 2005. In addition, UNDP will also issue best practice guidance on specific aspects of procurement as part of the overall strategy for the management of prescriptive content in UNDP.

22. Under the policy for prescriptive content approved by the Strategic Management Team (SMT) in 2004, UNDP will move progressively into online publishing of policies, procedures, and best practices with the establishment of mandatory time-bound sunset provisions for content reviews, the review of new/changed contents by competent community of practice and within the governance mechanism established.

23. UNDP is firmly committed to e-procurement solutions (recommendation 9) and capacity-building in recipient countries (recommendation 10). UNDP/Inter-Agency Procurement Services Office (IAPSO) already has an advanced e-procurement platform. As part of its next wave of enhancement of its ERP (Atlas system), UNDP is implementing an e-procurement solution globally in 2005 within the overall objective of building procurement capacity at programme government levels.

24. UNDP has no specific comments about the establishment of a unified system for ICAO, the International Telecommunication Union and the Universal Postal Union (recommendation 3). UNDP believes that the formal aspects of reporting on procurement activities and the professional exchange of procurement experiences and best practices are currently within the mandate of IAPWG (recommendation 7).

G. Harmonization of the conditions of travel throughout the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2004/10)

Scope

25. The objective of the report is to conduct a comparative analysis of various elements of travel: categories, class and means of travel, stopovers, subsistence allowances, terminal expenses, and lump sum option for officials travelling at the expense of the United Nations, and to propose measures for harmonizing travel policies and practices through the United Nations system.

Comments by UNDP

26. Generally, and subject to the further comments and observations below, UNDP finds the conclusions balanced and constructive.

27. UNDP has already implemented a number of the key recommendations raised by JIU. They included the implementation of the business-class travel rule for the Administrator, Associate Administrator and Assistant Secretaries-General of UNDP (recommendation 1), the implementation of the lump sum option to family visits and education travel and payment of lump sum (mandatory monetization) for appointment travel, reassignment travel and repatriation travel on separation (recommendation 2), the adoption of 75 per cent of the full economy fares as the lump sum option for home leave, family visits and education travel (recommendation 3)

28. Other recommendations implemented at UNDP included the internal control mechanism for exceptional upgrades (recommendation 5), rules concerning alternative transportation, rental of cars, daily subsistence allowance and terminal expenses, stopovers (recommendations 6 to 10), and management of the different categories of travel (recommendation 11).

29. UNDP supports the recommendation within the CEB framework to initiate a review of the standards of travel and entitlements for members of various organs and organizations in the United Nations system.